linktr.ee/rattlingthecages

In this Rattling the Cages panel talk, Eric King speaks with family members of political prisoners about how the repression and violence of incarceration impacts more than just those imprisoned. Sharon Shoatz (daughter of former political prisoner Russell "Maroon" Shoatz), susie day (partner of former political prisoner Laura Whitehorn), and Rochelle Bricker (partner of former political prisoner Eric King) speak to the familial harm of prison repression and the unswerving love and solidarity that keeps hope alive.

FIRESTORM

AK PRESS

RATTLING THE CAGES

ORAL HISTORIES OF NORTH AMERICAN POLITICAL PRISONERS

"Abolition Is a Family Affair"

ROCHELLE BRICKER | SHARON SHOATZ | susie day | ERIC KING

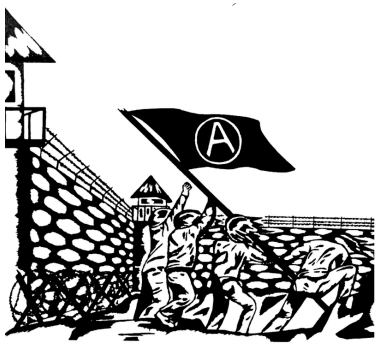
Originally hosted as a live conversation by Firestorm Books, recording available on Firestorm's youtube channel. *www.youtube.com/watch?v=RxH7AywBNdw*
February 22, 2025

Published by AK Press, *Rattling the Cages: Oral Histories of North American Political Prisoners* is a project of abolitionists Josh Davidson and Eric King. The book is filled with the experience and wisdom of over thirty current and former North American political prisoners. It provides first-hand details of prison life and the political commitments that continue to lead prisoners into direct confrontation with state authorities and institutions.

Transcription, editing, and formatting by ev, Danielle, Josh, & Jeremy with help from Firestorm Books.

all labor volunteered

with whatever weapons at hand



Rattling the Cages

1) Political Prisoners, Mass Incarceration, & Abolition
Eric King, Herman Bell, David Gilbert, Susan Rosenberg

2). Continuing the Struggle Inside & Out
Eric King, Ashanti Alston, Ray Luc Levasseur

3) Antifascism Behind Bars
Eric King and David Campbell

4) Black August & Prisoner Support
Eric King, dequi kioni-sadiki, Harold Taylor

5) Eric King in Conversation with James Kilgore
Eric King, James Kilgore

6) Post-Prison Activism & Archiving Resistance
Eric King, Jake Conroy, Claude Marks

7) Until All Are Free
Eric King, Jason Hammond, Jeremy Hammond

8) Revolutionary Women Behind Bars
Eric King, Linda Evans, Laura Whitehorn, Nicole Kissane

9) Becoming Politicized in Prison
Eric King, Josh Davidson, Hector Rodriguez, Farhan Ahmed

10) Rattling the Cages: How We Dit It & How You Can Too
Eric King, Sara Falconer, Josh Davidson

11) Abolition Is a Family Affair
Eric King, Sharon Shoatz, susie day, Rochell Bricker

12) Looking Back at the George Jackson Brigade
Mark Cook, Janine Bertram, Eric King

all conversations are available @FirestormCoop on youtube

Support Political Prisoners

As you've heard & read, it is vital that we support the political prisoners of our liberation movements. Providing support builds bridges across and through prison bars, giving those locked inside a connection to the outside world. Your support matters.

Get involved. Write to a political prisoner—a simple letter provides a needed escape. Visit them in prison. Ask what a political prisoner needs and do what you can to help them. Offer them support.

Visit the NYC Anarchist Black Cross website (*nycabc.wordpress.com*) and learn more about those currently imprisoned for political reasons.

Buy a Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners calendar (*certaindays.org*).

Visit your local Books Through Bars group and send books to those incarcerated (*booksthroughbarsnyc.org/resources*).

Join your nearest Anarchist Black Cross group (*abcf.net*).

Visit *rattlingthecages.com* to learn more.

Sharon Shoatz is the daughter of Russell "Maroon" Shoatz and is a retired NYC public school educator, active member within the Panther Cubs, and an advocate for the release and freedom of all political prisoners. Learn more about Russell "Maroon" Shoatz in the books *Maroon the Implacable: The Collected Writings of Russell Maroon Shoatz* and *I Am Maroon: The True Story of an American Political Prisoner.*

susie day is a journalist who showed up at the Washington, DC Jail in 1988 to interview four of the defendants in the Resistance Conspiracy case, charged with a string of anti-imperialist bombings. She ended up falling in love with the most nefarious of the lot, Laura Whitehorn. She and Laura now live together in New York City, where Laura works with Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP) and susie covers prison, policing, political activism — and sometimes writes satire. susie is the author of *The Brother You Choose: Paul Coates and Eddie Conway Talk About Life, Politics, and The Revolution.*

Rochell Bricker is a long time community and labor organizer, focusing on unions and class solidarity. Rochelle has an extensive history in prisoner support and in supporting the family members and partners of those incarcerated. She started and maintained the Eric King support team through Eric's entire incarceration. Rochelle is a multi-form artist and a parent of two, as well as the longtime partner of former political prisoner Eric King.

Eric King is a father, poet, author, and activist. In December 2023 he was released from the supermax ADX prison after spending nearly ten years as a political prisoner for an act of protest over the police murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. He was held in solitary confinement for years and was met with violence by guards throughout his incarceration. Eric has published three zines: *Battle Tested* (2015), *Antifa in Prison* (2019), and *Pacing in My Cell* (2019). His sentencing statement is included in the book *Defiance: Anarchist Statements Before Judge and Jury* (2019). Eric now works as a paralegal for the Bread and Roses Legal Center.

Libertie Valance: Alright everybody, I think it's time to start. I'm so glad you're here with us tonight. My name is Libertie, and I'm part of the Firestorm Collective. Tonight, we're excited to host *Rattling the Cages* co-creator Eric King in conversation with family members of former political prisoners for a discussion about the familial harm of prisons and the unswerving love and solidarity that keeps hope alive for folks inside.

In case this is your first *Rattling the Cages* event, I will say Firestorm is a 16-year-old radical bookstore owned and operated by a queer, feminist collective in southern Appalachia on the land of the Cherokee, and I'm a member of the team here at Firestorm....

We're going to get started, and I'll do a few quick introductions. First up, we've got Sharon Shoatz, who is the daughter of Russell Maroon Shoatz, a retired New York City public school educator, an active member within the Panther Cubs, and an advocate for the release and freedom of all political prisoners. Just so you know, you can learn more about Russell in the books *Maroon the Implacable: The Collected Writings of Russell Maroon Shoatz* and *I Am Maroon: The True Story of an American Political Prisoner*. Sharon, so glad you're here and so glad you're here in the "I Am Maroon" shirt.

Next up, susie day is a journalist who showed up at a Washington, DC jail in 1988 to interview four of the defendants in the Resistance Conspiracy Case charged with a string of anti-imperialist bombings. susie ended up falling in love with the most nefarious of the lot, Laura Whitehorn, who, I will mention, we actually had on for a previous *Rattling the Cages* event, which was a fantastic conversation specifically on women's prisons that was back in November. I just want to encourage everybody to go back and watch that conversation if you didn't catch it live. susie and Laura now live together in New York City, where Laura works with Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP) and susie covers prisons, policing, and political activism, and also sometimes writes satire. susie is the author of *The Brother You Choose: Paul Coates and Eddie Conway Talk About Life, Politics, and the Revolution.* We are so pleased to have you here tonight, susie.

Next up, we've got Rochelle Bricker, who is a longtime community and labor organizer focusing on unions and class solidarity. Rochelle has an extensive history in prisoner support and in supporting the family

Write to Political Prisoners mentioned in this conversation

for a monthly updated list of political prisoners & their addresses visit

nycabc.wordpress.com

he maintained until 2000 when he was arrested for the murder of a Fulton County cop. Later that year, another man confessed to the shooting. In 2002 Jamil, was convicted and sentenced to life without parole. *More information:* whathappened2rap.com

members and partners of those incarcerated. She started and maintained the Eric King support team throughout Eric's entire incarceration. Rochelle is a multiform artist and parent of two, as well as the lifelong partner of former political prisoner Eric King. Welcome, Rochelle.

Speaking of which, we've also got Eric King here to facilitate tonight. Eric is a father, poet, author, and activist. In December 2023, he was released from the supermax ADX prison after spending nearly 10 years as a political prisoner for an act of protest over the police murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. He was held in solitary confinement for years and was met with violence by guards throughout his incarceration. Eric has published three zines: *Battle Tested*, *Antifa in Prison*, and *Pacing in My Cell*. His sentencing statement is included in the book Defiance: *Anarchist Statements Before Judge and Jury*, which is an incredible book that everybody should pick up. And Eric now works as a paralegal for the Bread and Roses Legal Center. Thanks so much for being here, Eric, and for making all this possible.

Eric King: Libertie, thank you so much. For those who are listening and will be listening in the future, I want to point out that this conversation was desperately needed because the voices of loved ones are often left behind or often left unheard. And their experiences sometimes are not given as much weight as the prisoners themselves. This was incredibly important, so thank all of you for agreeing to do this and talking with me. This isn't something that we prepared for, per se, but it just popped in my head: I want to start with if you can remember your first experience going into the prison to see your loved one. The first time that you were in there, or realized what was happening, or how serious it was, or how shitty it was. Just what you felt that first time you went inside. We can go in order, so susie, do you want to start this time?

susie day: Let me just start by saying that I'm different than Rochelle or Sharon because you both were family members of somebody that you had already known in prison, right?

Eric King: No, Rochelle and I married inside.

susie day: Oh my god, okay. That's interesting. I just assumed...

Rochelle Bricker: Three months after his arrest, so before everything kicked off.

susie day: So you hadn't met each other before you went to prison?

Eric King: No

susie day: I guess I just assumed the whole married thing meant that it was for a long time. Okay, great!

Rochelle Bricker: It was still 10 years, but it was 10 years where we both knew what we were getting into. Well, I mean sort of. He was still pre-trial, but we both knew what that was going to be. But that was early on in our relationship, making those choices and commitments.

susie day: Then we do have a lot more in common than I thought. Because the first time I met Laura, I was going into the DC jail to interview the four women in Laura's Capitol bombing case—Susan Rosenberg, Marilyn Buck, Linda Evans, and then Laura. I guess I always knew it was serious because before that had happened I'd been following Susan Rosenberg's arrest. She, with two other political women, was kept in the sensory deprivation unit in Lexington, Kentucky, so I was somewhat familiar with that campaign to get them out. I mean, I kind of knew of the case through Susan, and then I went in to interview each of the four women for this story for Sojourners magazine. I think it was later that I wrote an essay about this, a long time ago. But later that day, on the train home to New York from DC, I just realized I had a massive crush on Laura. And then there were so many serious things in the way, because they were at that point facing like another 78 years in prison. Laura was the only one who didn't already have a huge sentence, and they wouldn't let her out on bail. But Susan Rosenberg already had 58 years; Linda Evans had, I can't remember, maybe 40 to 60; Marilyn Buck, of course... Anyway, I knew it was quite serious, and then falling in love with somebody—so that you have this heart connection with somebody in that kind of trouble—changed my life forever, in a way. Also, knowing Laura—because if you don't know both of us, I will say that we're kind of opposites in almost any way, politically especially—we started out our relationship arguing and we still do. Anyway, I don't know if that's enough of an answer...

Eric King: Yeah, that's perfect. Sharon, would you like to go?

Sharon Shoatz: I would say it was early on, because of course my father was incarcerated by 1972—I think I was about seven years old. So I was

sparked one of the most effective organizing efforts in defense of a political prisoner ever. Since that time, Mumia has had his death sentence overturned, but is still expected to serve the rest of his life in prison. He has released numerous books, including *Live From Death Row*. *More information:* freemumia.com

Yuri Kochiyama — a lifelong community builder and activist for social justice and human rights. Yuri was the child of Issei, first-generation Japanese Americans. Yuri's father was arrested by the FBI immediately after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December of 1941, was held as a "prisoner of war," interrogated, and died in the few short months before Yuri's family was forcibly evacuated, interned in a concentration camp, and disenfranchised of their family business and personal assets along with 120,000 other Japanese American citizens, under President Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066, issued on February 19, 1942. After the end of the war, Kochiyama moved to New York and eventually to Harlem, where she became involved in the civil rights movement. At first working with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Kochiyama's friendship with civil rights leader Malcolm X led her to affiliate with Black nationalist organizations such as the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), and the Republic of New Afrika (RNA).

Malcolm X — a Black revolutionary and Nation of Islam spokesman. During the Civil Rights Movement, Malcolm X advocated for freedom "by any means necessary." After leaving the Nation of Islam, Malcolm traveled to Africa and West Asia, meeting with revolutionary Pan-African socialist leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Ben Bella, Gamal Abdel Nasser, and others. Before his assassination, Malcolm converted to Sunni Islam, and after completing the Hajj to Mecca he became known as "el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz." Malcolm connected with the communist Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) and advocated revolutionary Black internationalism, before he was assassinated on February 21, 1965.

Jamil Al-Amin — formerly known as H. Rap Brown, the Imam came to prominence in the 1960s as chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Justice Minister of the Black Panther Party. He is perhaps most famous for his proclamation during that period that "violence is as American as cherry pie," as well as once stating that "If America don't come around, we're gonna burn it down." In 1968, Jamil went underground after facing weapons and incitement to riot charges following a rally that occurred in Cambridge, Maryland which left Jamil with a shotgun wound to the head. After 18 months in hiding and on the FBI's Most Wanted list, Jamil resurfaced in an attack of a New York City bar which was targeted for its exploitation of the community. This action resulted in a shootout with police that left Jamil and two cops with injuries. Jamil subsequently spent 5 years in prison for charges related to the incident. Upon his release, Jamil opened a grocery store in Atlanta, which

MOVE member, from the death penalty, and to free all political prisoners and prisoners of war. Merle Africa passed away in prison in 1988 at the age of 47, and Phil Africa passed away in prison in 2015 at the age of 59. The first of the MOVE 9 to be released was Debbie Sims Africa in 2018 –– Debbie, who was 22 when sentenced, reunited with her 39-year-old son, Michael Davis Africa, Jr., whom Debbie gave birth to a month after she was imprisoned and who was taken from her a week later. Michael Africa was also released in 2018. Janine and Janet Africa were released after 41 years of imprisonment in 2019, as well as Eddie Goodman Africa. Delbert Orr Africa, and the last to be released, Chuck Sims Africa, were both released in 2020.

Leonard Peltier — A Native American political prisoner who was sentenced to two consecutive life sentences for a crime he was set up for — the killing of two FBI agents. In the early 70s, Native Americans on the Pine Ridge Reservation were assaulted and murdered by a group of vigilantes and looked towards the American Indian Movement (AIM) for help. Hundreds of AIM members occupied the village of Wounded Knee in Pine Ridge in 1973, demanding an end to the U.S.-backed murder and intimidation of AIM supporters on the reservation and that the treaties signed by the U.S. be honored that gave the Lakota people the right to self-rule the land surrounding the Black Hills. Federal authorities surrounded the occupation with an army of over 300. The Indians refused to back down. They used weapons to defend themselves and held off the government forces for 73 days. After the siege, Leonard came to Pine Ridge with a few other AIM members in 1975 and set up camp in the village of Oglala to protect the village from vigilantes. On July 26, 1975 two FBI agents drove into the property unannounced and unidentified, and a firefight erupted, leaving the two FBI agents and one AIM member dead, while scores of FBI agents and U.S. Marshals surrounded the property. It is believed that the attack against the AIM activists was an attempt to create a diversion for a secret agreement to transfer parts of the Pine Ridge Reservation to the federal government. With fabricated evidence and preventing Leonard from claiming self-defense, Leonard was convicted to two life sentences in federal prison. The struggle for Leonard's freedom finally won, and Leonard's life sentence was commuted to home confinement beginning on February 18, 2025. Leonard wrote the book *Prison Writings: My Life Is My Sun Dance.*

Mumia Abu Jamal — an award winning journalist and was one of the founders of the Black Panther Party chapter in Philadelphia, PA. He has struggled for justice and human rights for people of color since he was at least 14 years old, the age when he joined the Party. In December of 1982, Mumia, who moonlighted by driving a taxi, happened upon police who were beating his brother. During the melee, a police officer was shot and killed. Despite the fact that many people saw someone else shoot and runaway from the scene, Mumia, in what could only be called a kangaroo court, was convicted and sentenced to death. During the summer of 1995, a death warrant was signed by Governor Tom Ridge, which

visiting him very early in my life, and then I think when I knew it was really serious is when he escaped. He was all over the television and the newspapers and it was like "cop killer," so I was very clear then if I wasn't clear before then that it was something serious. I guess that was probably the first time I actually really knew.

Then of course after that it was the challenges of visiting him, because of those escapes and the torture he took on after the escapes, the beatings, and then being isolated from general population. So very early on I knew growing up.

Eric King: Alright, Cabbage, do you want to go?

Rochelle Bricker: Thank you for sharing that. That really fascinates me, because it's just suddenly you have an identity to the whole world, like they didn't know you before and now everybody who meets you has some concept of that. And that's got to be a really radical change at the age of seven, like, "us versus them."

Our first visit was a few months into Eric's sentence. I started writing to him. I'd written to people and supported prisoners before, so it wasn't anything different. However, opening his first letter was different. The first time we talked on the phone it was different. To go visit him I drove eight hours down to CCA Leavenworth, and you have to go in this little trailer in the back of the unit, because he was in the SHU at the time. He was in the SHU when I first met him and then pretty consistently throughout, so a lot of the time our visits were through screens. So sitting there and there's this guard sitting there, and I believe it wasn't just me, there was a friend of mine there too who was also supporting him. But it was embarrassing because there was a very obvious connection that we didn't really understand necessarily until midway through. So I feel like that whole visit was just a pretty chaotic blur. He was facing two counts of 30 years each at the time. I think that was the plea they were offering, two counts of 30 years each, but it moved down throughout. But when we first met there was no guarantee of the 10 years, so I was walking into the unknown.

Eric King: Thank you. I want to stick to visits. While your loved one is inside, that's often the only contact you have. I'll start with you this time, Sharon. If we could talk about what visits were like. Were you able to play

games? Were the guards respectful or disrespectful? Were there other inmates around? What sort of connections were you able to maintain and develop through visits? It's a big question, but I'm interested and I want people to know what that connection was really like with a loved one inside. Sharon, if you'd fire us off.

Sharon Shoatz: Again, I just want to clarify, he was locked up when I was seven. But, of course, over the time—years, decades—he's been incarcerated, because I'm now getting ready to turn 60, so the visits started from something simple as going to Graterford prison and picnics outside. Because I was a young kid then. Like I said, after he escaped, when I was in 6th grade, it got more draconian, so to speak, with the visits. Of course he was more segregated.

Then, after the second escape of course they were definitely more draconian, to the point where I think it was either Dallas or Huntingdon prisons where my brother and I had to walk through the entire prison. It wasn't even in a visiting room, it was where they had the hole, so to speak, what they called it at that time. It was crazy, because there were catcalls and people whistling, and the barber shop was on this side. It was all the daily activities that took place during the course of the day in the institution, and I'm walking through this entire place—of course, never seeing it before, because usually all you see is the visiting room. When we get back there it's a square room with cells on the outside of it for all the people that were in the hole. The room was a clear box and my father was at a table, handcuffed to the table.

So, yes, I've seen various things, from dogs sniffing our cars to not having on the right clothes (and having clothes in our trunk), to make sure everybody had a driver's license in case one of us didn't get in, you can't sit on the property. All the things and barriers that are put up for you not to see your loved ones. It's like the family is also being punished in this whole process.

Eric King: Were you able to ever have physical visits after the escapes? Was he always in that sort of situation or did you get those back?

Sharon Shoatz: No. Once he went to Greene prison, that was 22 years there, but prior to that, at either Dallas or Huntingdon—I can't remember —it was the same type of thing. He was in the hole, so those

feared for, was hidden from the government. Dylcia was released in 1999 when her and 16 other Puerto Rican political prisoners' sentences were commuted. She returned to Puerto Rico where she spent her final years. She passed away June 30, 2024.

Carmen Valentine — a member of the FALN, an armed clandestine group which fought for Puerto Rican independence from the United States during the 1970s and 1980s. On April, 4, 1980, the U.S. government captured 11 Puerto Rican women and men and accused them of being members of the FALN. All 11 declared themselves prisoners of war, since Puerto Rico has been militarily occupied since the US invasion in 1898. As anti-colonial freedom fighters, they completely refused to recognize U.S. jurisdiction and demanded to be tried by an international tribunal or set free. Carmen was sentenced in 1980 for seditious conspiracy and other charges on February 18, 1981 to 90 years imprisonment. Carmen was released early from prison after President Bill Clinton extended a clemency offer to her and 16 other FALN prisoners in 1999, after which she returned to Puerto Rico.

Alicia and Ida Luz Rodríguez — Puerto Rican revolutionaries and members of the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional Puertorriqueña (FALN). Alicia and Ida were arrested in 1980 with 10 others, convicted of seditious conspiracy and related charges, and sentenced to 55 and 83 years in prison. They had been linked to more than 100 bombings or attempted bombings since 1974 in their attempt to achieve independence for Puerto Rico. At the time of their arrests, the Alicia, Ida Luz, and the others declared themselves to be combatants in an anti-colonial war against the United States to liberate Puerto Rico from U.S. domination and invoked prisoner of war status. They argued that the U.S. courts did not have jurisdiction to try them as criminals and petitioned for their cases to be handed over to an international court that would determine their status. The U.S. government did not recognize their request. For many years, numerous national and international organizations fought for the freedom of the Puerto Rican POWs. They were both released from prison after Bill Clinton offered clemency to sixteen members of the FALN in 1999.

MOVE 9 — Chuck, Delbert, Eddie, Janet, Janine, Merle, Michael, Phil, and Debbie Sims Africa — Black revolutionaries from MOVE, a Black liberation collective in Philedelphia, who were imprisoned in 1978 after a shootout with Philedelphia Police during their attempt to evict the collective as part of a wider strategy to crush Black liberation movements. Each was sentenced to a maximum 100 years in prison. The MOVE collective's house would later be bombed by an Pennsylvania State Police, Philadelphia Police, and FBI operation, killing 11 people in the house (including five children aged 7 to 13), and starting a fire that would spread and destroy approximately 65 houses. Ramona Africa, one of the two MOVE survivors from the house, said that police fired at those trying to escape. The MOVE 9 consistently organized inside to save Mumia Abu-Jamal, a

maximum security federal penitentiary at Marion when accused by the FBI of an escape conspiracy with Puerto Rican POW Oscar López Rivera and New Afrikan POW Kojo Bomani Sababu. Tim was an active organizor in efforts to end the Marion lockdown and close the Control Units. Tim worked to encourage publication/exposure of artistic and cultural work by POWs and political prisoners in the US, editing and publishing with United Freedom Front revolutioanry political prisoner Ray Luc Levasseur the book *Hauling Up the Morning / Izando la mañana: Writings and Art by Political Prisoners and Prisoner of War in the U.S.* with an introduction by Assata Shakur. After his release in 1997, Tim has helped to expand underground art scenes, has continued to play jazz music, and expanded his artistic pursuits to acting, set design, screen writing, installation art, and performance art. Tim's his poetry, artwork, and other work can be found at busyhominid.com

David Luis "Suave" Gonzalez — was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole when he was 17. In many states — including Pennsylvania, where Gonzalez was sentenced — there are few, if any, college opportunities for people with such lengthy sentences. Still, Gonzalez eventually fought his way into Villanova University's privately funded college program at Graterford Prison, the maximum security facility where he was incarcerated. There he earned a bachelor's in education and marketing. While incarcerated, Gonzalez developed a decades-long friendship with journalist Maria Hinojosa. The two would later work together to document his time in prison and subsequent release, in 2017 after a Supreme Court decision that ruled automatic life sentences without parole for juveniles as unconstitutional, in an eponymous podcast, Suave, which won the 2022 Pulitzer Prize. Now, Gonzalez is a support coach with I Am More, a reentry program for formerly incarcerated students at Philadelphia Community College. He also co-hosts Death by Incarceration, which will be featuring episodes this fall focused on the various ways people in prison get an education.

Dylcia Pagan — a revolutionary Puerto Rican member of the FALN who received a sentence of 55 years for seditious conspiracy and other charges. As a student at Brooklyn College she helped organize the Puerto Rican Student Union which resulted in the formulation of a student-controlled Puerto Rican Studies Department. By the early 1970s, she began a career as a TV producer and writer developing investigative documentaries and children's programs. She worked with the Puerto Rican Media and Education Council, which filed a series of lawsuits against the major television stations which facilitated the local public affairs programming that still exists today. She also worked as the English editor of the bilingual daily, El Tiempo. Dylcia and 11 others were arrested on April 4, 1980, in Evanston, Illinois. They had been linked to more than 100 bombings or attempted bombings since 1974 in their attempt to achieve independence for Puerto Rico. None of the bombings of which they were convicted resulted in deaths or injuries. When she was arrested, her young child, whose safety she

type of visits. He was just not in general population. They were not going to let any visits take place in general population. Once he got to Greene, it was even more restricted, with the glass, he's handcuffed the entire time behind glass with a phone. We're on the other side with little holes on the side for us to communicate through, and it was a little box, barely two chairs, three chairs could fit in. And again, this is not a part of the general process. I've been on a lot of visits that were mostly designed for no contact, and to be on the other side of a window and still to be handcuffed the entire visit, and then the visits were like one hour for Greene during a weekday. So all of those barriers that are put up for families—it's already in a rural area, transportation, the cost, all the financial stuff that comes with that. I hope I'm not going on and on.

Eric King: No, this is what I want people to understand—how big of a burden they make these visits to try to rip families apart. Thank you. Cabbage, would you go next, and we'll end with susie on this one?

Rochelle Bricker: Will you ask the question one more time so I can refresh?

Eric King: We're trying to figure out what visits were actually like. Were you able to connect, were you able to play games, did you have confrontations or bad problems with guards? Just what the visiting experience overall was like for you.

Rochelle Bricker: No matter what the type of visit, because we visited a bunch of different types of ways, you only have whatever connection you can make. After you pass the different levels of problems, and different prisons will have different things. Like at some prisons, maybe the guards at the front are decent, or it's a good rotation, or maybe you don't have to drive very far, or maybe you can get there on your own, you have a car and you have gas and you have people to go with you, but maybe it's not that. Maybe they are going with you, maybe it's terrible, terrible things—especially if you're a trauma survivor, and most of us are by that point because of what we've engaged in—and you have to find a way to maintain access to yourself while fighting these people, sparring with them.

It's always a mind game. Going in, waiting. It's always a mind game. Once we would get past that, yeah, but if we had an hour and I had to drive

eight hours to Kansas and I was in a thing, I mean honestly at that point it was just bliss because we didn't have very much time where we got to see each other's faces. But as he got further in, the war started between them and us. Our first war started because of his counselor. They're supposed to have visits within 24 hours if you're married, like you can have one visit in the first week with your family. And we emailed the stuff for the counselor, and then the counselor took it upon herself to Google me, and she told him that I would not be having a visit, that I had violated something. I don't remember what it was. It turns out she had found an article about me, because there were some Ferguson protests going on, and while I was bailing some people out, I was breastfeeding my daughter, and a police officer told me to stop breastfeeding. Like, "You can't do that here." And it blew up into a big thing, and they had seen those articles, and they downloaded them, and we found them later in discovery. They had used those to try to threaten our visits a few different times, and they showed up in discovery photos. They have been passing photos of me nursing my daughter that they had downloaded from the internet, that they had downloaded from rightwing blogs. That was like the start of their little security file, and we were always on it. I mean, it was a lot through the years, and that was what they would use to try to separate us.

That's kind of why the attacks came, too, because we were happy. We were so happy. We first got to sit next to each other in Englewood. We were holding hands, and our love through our hands was so offensive to them that they had to tell us, "No, you guys actually can't hold hands." But then we wouldn't be touching each other but sending energy to each other and stuff like that. It was just always a new level of offense. They would trash whatever games we would play. They would play little games like trying to set the kids in the pedophile section with us for visits. Just whatever power things they could do. But if we could fight past that and if we could keep our wall down or lower our wall enough to let each other through—and we weren't always above that. I would shut down. Sometimes I would get triggered. He'd have to come with lists of topics prepared on his hand in case I was emotionally just out of it. But it was just all finding new ways to connect and whatever channels they block off just popping up and finding another one.

Eric King: susie?

susie day: There are whole novels that everybody, all of us, could write

destroyed by those units. The PIC has gone through major changes over the past several decades. Unfortunately, what we thought then has come to pass — if they could do it to this group of three, or five women for two years in a basement in Kentucky — then they're going to do it every- where. And that is what happened.

Alan Berkman — an anti-imperialist revolutionary and revolutionary physician, who was sentenced to 10 years in prison, primarily in solitary confinement, as part of the Resistance Conspiracy Case, along with Tim Blunk, Linda Evans, Susan Rosenberg, and Laura Whitehorn. In 1960s Alan was active in the student anti-war movement and the civil rights movement. As a physician, Alan used his medical skills and political experience to build solidarity with the Black Liberation and Black Power movements, the American Indian Movement (AIM), and the Puerto Rican Independence Movement, as well as international liberation struggles such as those in southern Africa. As a physician, Alan served in oppressed communities, visited numerous political prisoners to expose human rights abuses, treated of prisoners after the September 1971 Attica Rebellion, and evaded the cordon established by the U.S. Marshals Service to provide medical care during the Wounded Knee incident in 1973. In 1982, Alan was imprisoned for nine months as a grand jury resister for refusing to collaborate with an investigation of the Black liberation movement, after which he was indicted in for providing medical care clandestinely to a wounded revolutionary after the Brinks expropriation. Alan went underground before the trial. Captured by the FBI in Philadelphia and accused of acts claimed by the Armed Resistance Movement and the Red Guerrilla Resistance. Held in preventive detention for two years until trials in 1987, despite a newly diagnosed cancer requiring specialized care. After his release in 1992, Alan worked as a doctor at a South Bronx clinic for parolees who use drugs. In 1995, he returned to Columbia University as a postdoctoral research fellow and used his medical research and politics to struggle for people living with HIV/AIDS. Alan passed away in Manhattan at the age of 63 from lymphoma on June 5, 2009.

Tim Blunk — an anti-imperialist revolutionary and political prisoner from the Resistance Conspiracy Case. Tim was a student activist in Western Massachusetts during the late 70s, working in solidarity with Southern African, Palestinian, and Black liberation movements and campus human rights struggles. In the 1970s, Tim travelled to Cuba and Central America as a part of radical delegations and organized resistance to Ku Klux Klan and white supremacist violence in the Northeast. In New York City, Tim was employed as a day care teacher and worked in solidarity with Puerto Rican independence movement. In 1981, Tim was arrested and beaten by police in an anti-apartheid direct action and served one year in prison. Arrested with Susan Rosenberg in 1984, they took political position of captured members of anti-imperialist clandestine resistance, using "necessity defense" based upon international law — both received unprecedented sentences of 58 years. In 1986, Tim was sent to

destroy women involved in radical and revolutionary political and literal activity.

Brown: How have you seen the prison industrial complex (PIC) shift and evolve since the closure of Lexington HSU? What strategies and tactics have you seen emerge?

Rosenberg: Well, I think Lexington HSU was an experiment by the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) and the FBI. The point of that unit was to break us, to have us renounce our political beliefs, to "go crazy", to isolate us, and to try and break the movement's support of us and our relationship to the movement. That was really the intention. And while we won litigation against Lexington HSU and got the unit closed, it was overturned on appeal. Up until Marion and Lexington, you were sentenced to prison, and if people went into solitary confinement it was a punishment for behavior that occurred while you were in the prison itself. Once our case got reversed on appeal, it meant that the BOP could put any prisoner in any prison in any location for any length of time without any due process or external accountability around that. This gave them the green light to build these units in multiple places, which they did over the rest of the 1980s and the 1990s. It was also the period where the rise in the actual population of people in prison grew exponentially. These numbers remained on the rise — with the war on crime, the war on drugs, and then the war on terror, which came a little later.

While we won something and were able to ex- pose some of the terrible treatment that we (political prisoners) were getting, we always took the position that if they can do it to us, then they can massify it and do it to everybody. The PIC emerged out of the desire to incapacitate large numbers of people and that's what they did in part by building lockdown prisons like ADX Florence in Colorado and countless others.

Anyone who got convicted in the 1990s and in the early 2000s and was labeled by the government as a "terrorist" automatically went into lockdown isolation units — we have seen this before at complexes like Abu Ghraib. There are also isolation medical units in the federal prison. Morerecently, COVID-19 protocol is that everyone gets put in utter isolation, whether that's called an isolation unit or not. The goal to truly incapacitate thousands and thousands of people becomes really central to the mission of the BOP, and prisons at the state-level all fall in line with that. From the time that I was one of the first women in the Lexington HSU, the massification of control units has just become enormous. The 2011 and 2013 resistance out of Pelican Bay, as well as the strike in 2018 in South Carolina over conditions inside, are responses to this very deep, very serious commitment to the myth of rehabilitation that is imploding on itself.

There is no rehabilitation — there's only suffering. The stories of people who survived those units are not the majority of people. The majority of people get

here, and we're just skimming the surface. When you were talking, Rochelle, I was struck with the difference between the kind of zeitgeist you guys went through and what Laura and I were in, because this was the late 80s through the 90s, until she got out in 1999. The interweb was basically not around, just barely, so there weren't a whole lot of right-wing blogs and all that stuff. Part of my role in visiting Laura was quite often—especially in the DC jail before they got sentenced and dispersed to other prisons—to interview Laura, and I went back and interviewed Alan Berkman and Tim Blunk. My role then was to be part of a team, which included lawyers and other journalists, to keep some kind of public awareness of these people—without the internet. Basically to keep their case in the public eye, or at least in the countercultural eye, so that they could get some support, because that was a kind of survival.

I was helping to create a public presence for Laura and Alan and Tim and Marilyn and Susan and Linda, and in doing that I feel like it's probably really different than what you guys went through. I guess there was a different level of public perception. And I think in Maroon's case, I think he is of that vintage, too, where you needed stories out about your dad to keep him in the public eye so he gets some protection. As little as that can be, it's something—a little publicity, some petitions, some picketing, whatever helps. It helps keep them alive.

Doing that, I think in some ways complicated my relationship with Laura, because in some ways I was kind of a press agent and at the same time we were also just arguing, as we usually do, about revolution and politics and stuff like that. Then, just as a normal human being. I would occasionally visit her in a nonprofessional capacity—and the pat searches, I mean the DC jail was "Pat City." I basically got busted for trying to take in Chinese food occasionally, and I did get some egg rolls in one time.

But, yeah, to everything that Sharon is saying. You're terrified about getting kicked out when you're so desperate to talk to this person, and you want to be on your best behavior, but you're under so much stress. And so are they, because the visit can be interrupted at any time, for any reason, and you desperately want to spend some time and make a connection, and it's the only chance you have to bring your realities together inside prison and the life outside. It's an impossible situation, but all you could do is try. And I think we've all tried, and it's really frustrating and heartbreaking, but necessary.

Eric King: Thank all three of you for answering that question. Some of these aren't easy questions. There's a lot of hurt built up in this for what they did to your loved ones and to you. I just have so much love and respect for all three of you for sharing this with us. This time I'm going to start with you, Rochelle. I want to know what perhaps your best moment was with your loved one inside. So susie, Sharon as well, what moment really just filled you with joy or hope or happiness, where you could let loose?

Rochelle Bricker: I would say there were different kinds of freedoms, different kinds of moments, and different kinds of stuff. When Eric was pre-trial it was like the great antifascist awakening, when antifascists came out of the closet. Trump was getting elected, and he started talking a lot about antifascists. So when Eric got to Englewood, it was after the president had already started, and they had already decided we were the enemy, and that they were going to uncover whatever it was and send him to ADX or CMU. They had already decided. They had started. We could see the paper trail on the road in discovery, but they had started that process. So our time was very combative, in every prison, in every way. Then, for four years of it maybe, he was pre-trial for the second case, and it was a case against the BOP, so all we had was combat.

My best times were when we'd be fighting them and winning during the visit, for whatever it was. Like there was somebody pissing me off, and I got that person in trouble in some way, like a backhanded way. And if we got in their heads, when we were united against them. There was always a swing, so we could either just be battered all the time or we could strategize together. We could find out how to protect ourselves against them, and I think that was really unifying.

I think ADX though was probably our most healing time, because it was the first time where they couldn't do anything worse to us. Like there was a limit, and they had to be nice to us. When he got to ADX, they weren't pretending. Each prison would kind of pretend they didn't do the things that they did to us, and it would be this pretense and stuff. But when they got there, it wasn't a pretense anymore. They all would acknowledge what had been done to us previously. There were times where people beefed on the way in, but for the most part I would drive out there—it was like little stalls, too, it was a stark white room and there were maybe like eight stalls. You have a couple chairs and you get in your little thing. And we

Lexington Control Unit — the High Security Unit at FCI Lexington, an experimental total lockdown isolation unit in the basement of a building, totally separate from the rest of FCI Lexington. The Lexington Control Unit was designed for the express purpose of caging women political prisoners involved in revolutionary struggles. It was successfully shut down in a protracted struggle lead by women political prisoners.

An excerpt of an interview with Susan Rosenberg in the Fall 2023 / Winter 2024 issue of Critical Resistance's *The Abolitionist* newspaper, Issue 40 on control units:

Brown: Can you speak to the political conditions that led to the creation of the Lexington High Security Unit (HSU) in 1986, and the significance of this unit in the effort to contain and control women involved in revolutionary struggles?

Rosenberg: From the late 1960s and into the early 1980s, revolutionary activity was going on against the US, and there was repression through COINTELPRO that was "officially over" in the late 1970s — but not really. During this period, a number of our movement leaders were imprisoned at similar times. They were Puerto Rican independentista revolutionaries, Black revolutionaries, New Afrikan freedom fighter revolutionaries, and anti-imperialist political prisoners. There were more women at that moment part of revolutionary movements who were caught, tried, and imprisoned — of which I was one.

In the 1970s, the "war on drugs" began as rhetoric that turned to a literal war against Black, Puerto Rican, and poor communities, instigating a whole generation of people going to prison in the 1970s and 1980s. The US government was building more repressive apparatuses — high security prisons — for the current wave of revolutionary political activism against the US and for what would come in the future. For example, the Reagan administration imported and exported isolation as a mechanism of imprisonment. Political prisoners in Germany,Uruguay, Spain and Ireland were the first wave of people imprisoned under these torture-like conditions utilizing isolation as the mechanism to drive people either insane or to die by suicide. While solitary confinement and torture existed already, it hadn't existed at this scale, and in such a systematic targeted way.

There were a number of factors that went into creating the conditions for these units. The first lock-down prisons were in the federal prison system — the Marion prison was one of the very early prisons in complete lockdown, which meant everybody in that prison was in solitary confinement and in units that existed for that purpose. Before Marion and Lexington, there was an experimental isolation wing at FPC Alderson in West Virginia where Assata Shakur, Marilyn Buck, Susan Saxe, Saffiyah Bukari and Lolita Lebrón were all imprisoned temporarily, in isolation. That was one of the very first attempts to

Release Aging People in Prison RAPP — led by formerly incarcerated people and family members of people in prison, RAPP works to end mass incarceration and promote racial justice through the release of aging people in prison and those serving long sentences. More information: rappcampaign.com

Susan Rosenberg — spent sixteen years in high security federal prisons for her involvement in the anti-imperialist armed actions that culminated in the Resistance Conspiracy Case of the mid-1980s. Her sentence was commuted by outgoing president Bill Clinton in 2001. Susan was imprisoned at the Lexington high security unit at FCI Lexington, the first maximum security prison for women in Marianna, Florida, and FCI Danbury, and she also spent time in the DC jail. She was involved in the May 19th Communist Organization, the Puerto Rican independence movement, the movement to Ban the Box, and the successful fight for the release of longtime political prisoner Dr. Mutulu Shakur. Susan published the book *An American Radical: Political Prisoner in My Own Country* (2011).

Marilyn Buck — an anti-imperialist revolutionary who was imprisoned for her participation in the 1979 prison escape of Assata Shakur, the 1981 Brinks robbery, and the 1983 U.S. Senate bombing. Marilyn joined Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) during the height of activism against the Vietnam War while at the University of Texas. In 1967 she moved to Chicago where she edited the SDS newsletter New Left Notes, and incorporated Marxist feminism into the organization's politics. In San Francisco, she worked with Third World Newsreel, a media collective that showcased anti-imperialist and anti- colonialist struggles around the world. Convicted for purchasing ammunition for the Black Liberation Army in 1973, she was sentenced to 10 years in prison, furloughed in 1977, and went underground instead of returning to prison. After her capture and convictions in 1985, she was sentenced to 80 years in federal prison, where she wrote on women in prison, solitary confinement, political prisoner support, and revolutionary poetry. Marilyn passed away on August 3, 2010.

Linda Evans — was an anti-imperialist political prisoner for 16 years, and before her imprisonment she was involved in many organizations, including Students for a Democratic Society, the Weather Underground, and the May 19th Communist Organization. She was captured in 1985 and convicted for her part in the Resistance Conspiracy Case. Her sentence was commuted by outgoing president Bill Clinton in 2001. Linda was imprisoned at various jails, including the DC jail and FCI Dublin. Since her release, she has co-founded All of Us or None, a grassroots civil rights organization of formerly incarcerated people and their families, and she works tirelessly with California Coalition for Women Prisoners, the Drop LWOP Coalition, the Immigrant Defense Taskforce of North Bay Organizing Project in Santa Rosa, and the successful campaign to free Dr. Mutulu Shakur. Along with her partner Eve Goldberg, Linda wrote *The Prison-Industrial Complex and the Global Economy* (2009).

had a great time in SHU visiting because it's just us. It's just us in our little stall, or it's just us in our little room. There's glass in between, but that was when visits started getting just a lot better. They weren't with the cops standing over you like they are a part of your whole visit, like they are a part of the energy, intruding. At least at ADX it was high-tech. We knew that what we were saying was being recorded and would go to CT, would go to the counterterrorism unit. We knew there was a record of all of it for the first time, and so when things were coming in they just couldn't hurt us as royally anymore. So we were able to talk about the three years without phone and what happened and talk about the year without visits or phone, what happened to both of us. Because we didn't have a phone for quite a bit, so those were definitely, I'd say, our best visits.

Eric King: Thank you. I would have said family day at Florence.

Rochelle Bricker: Yeah, but that's one day, and we only got one of those, and then they took it away by attacking you a few months afterwards. So I have feelings about family day.

Eric King: Sharon?

Sharon Shoatz: I would say probably my happiest was seeing him get out of solitary. My brother and I were the first to visit him that first evening he was able to get a visit at Graterford. They had night visits, and I was happy. I was taken aback a little bit by the fact that when I hugged him it felt not as I dreamt it, not as I imagined it, not the sparks and sensations. You know how you have these realities in your head of what that feels like and what that looks like? That feeling was empty, and I don't know if it was because he had not touched anybody for 22 years or whether I had this grand idea in my head that was loftier than expectations. I think it was a combination of both. No touching for 22 years. And to hug somebody and not feel what you believe you should feel because of the fact that he hasn't touched anyone in 22 years. He couldn't even go down the steps because he hadn't walked down steps in 22 years. So that was happy and it was a bittersweet pill, as well. But it was one of the happiest times for me, I think.

Second for me was the fact that once he was out, I was even able to come to Graterford. There was a program being sponsored by one of the juvenile

lifers there, David Luis "Suave" Gonzalez. He's an artist, award winning podcaster, and he's now out, but he had a program there, and my dad was like, "He's going to let you come. You and Russ get here, and we're going to be able to break bread together." I was like, "Wow," because I really hadn't thought about it. You're so busy trying to free your loved ones that you don't even think about the little things you've missed like sitting down at a table and eating with your father. I'm like, "Wow, I didn't even..." Then when we were there, it was so powerful in the sense that my dad's a character, of course, when it comes to fried chicken. They were stacking up the fried chicken next to him, and he was just taking it, and that was the first time I had even seen that side of him outside of sitting in the visiting rooms. So I think the happiest moment was those two moments for me, particularly sitting down and being able to break bread at a table with my father for the first time ever.

Eric King: Thank you so much for sharing that. susie, best moments and visits?

susie day: Well, speaking of breaking bread, there were of course the vending machines. You always joke about "all that money for such crap," and then you have to be sure and pick out just the right thing. If it was possible to find the little chicken patty with... Anyway, happy times. That was really hard. I can't help but look at the chat where Laura is saying it's so important to remember that none of our communications were private. Yeah, that had a lot to do with it. I mean, when we would talk on the phone, which was sporadic, we would get into these discussions—and then some occasional misunderstandings, even arguments. At some point, I always felt like asking the FBI guy on the line to roll back the conversation so we could hear what I actually really did say. I feel like we might as well use this surveillance state to help iron out relationships.

But happiness, I don't think... I mean there was just the joy of loving somebody even though the circumstances were so dire and scary. But actual good times probably occurred in Dublin prison after Laura finally had a release date. This would be the late 90s, and I would visit her in California where the weather is usually pretty nice. We would sit on this patio. It was outdoors. They yanked out a huge, great willow tree, which was a tragedy, because they wanted to keep it serious, but it was still pretty nice. There were flowers. There was one time where we would take our chairs and go down and sit by the flower bed and not be monitored,

People, Places, Events, & Organizations

Russell Maroon Shoatz — a Black revolutionary and member of the Black Liberation Army (BLA) who escaped multiple times from prison, earning the name "Maroon." Maroon grew up in Philly and as a part of his gang activities spent his youth in and out of reform schools and youth institutions. During the early and mid 60s, Maroon become politically active in the Black liberation movement, co-founding the Black Unity Council, which later merged with the Philadelphia chapter of the Black Panther Party in 1969. In August 1970, at the height of the state repression of the Black liberation movement, Maroon and four others became fugitives ("The Philly 5"), after a police officer was killed in a retaliatory attack on a Philadelphia police station. From August 1970 to January 1972, the date of his capture, Maroon was active on the armed front of the Black Liberation Army. Maroon was sentenced to life after his capture and conviction. In September 1977, Maroon and three other Black prisoners liberated themselves from the Huntingdon state prison in Pennsylvania. Two of them were recaptured, another was killed, but Maroon remained free for a month, fleeing from a massive "slave hunt" by local, state, federal, and militia forces. In March 1980, Maroon and another Black political prisoner of war liberated themselves after a Black activists smuggled a revolver and sub-machine gun into the institution. All three were captured after a gun battle with local, state, county, and federal forces. Despite enduring over 22 consecutive years of solitary confinement, Maroon organized liberation schools in the prisons, and remained a committed freedom fighter. Maroon was granted compassionate release in 2021, after suffering from cancer. Maroon passed away less than two months later, on December 17. Maroon is the author of *Maroon the Implacable: The Collected Writings of Russell Maroon Shoatz*, *The Dragon and the Hydra: A Historical Study of Organizational Method*, and an autobiography, *I Am Maroon: The True Story of an American Political Prisoner*.

Laura Whitehorn — an anti-imperialist revolutionary and artist, who was imprisoned for 14 years in federal prison for the 1983 U.S. Senate bombing as part of the Resistance Conspiracy Case. After working as an organizer for Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), Laura became a member of the Weather Underground organization in 1969. Laura, along with approximately 55 other people, was arrested during "The Days of Rage," several days of street fighting between protesters and police, after the WUO blew up an 1889 commemorative nine-foot bronze statue of a Chicago policeman located in Haymarket Square. By the early 1980s, Whitehorn was active in a variety of radical organizations, in addition to the May 19 Communist Organization, including the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee and the Madame Binh Graphics Collective. During this time, Whitehorn worked with radical movements in Rhodesia, South Africa and Palestine. During the 14 years Whitehorn served in prison, she directed AIDS education and wrote numerous publications. In 2013, Whitehorn along with Kathy Boudin and Mujahid Farid founded the Release Aging People in Prison campaign.

someone in ADX, I recommend Randy Platt. If you want to write to anyone else, please do. Also, please support their families. Understand that this isn't a one-person show, it's not just one person locked up, as everyone here has attested. It is their families, it is their friends, it is their communities, and we need to lift each other up because no one else is going to do it. So, thank you, you three, so, so much. This really moved me and it was really powerful. And thank you Libertie, and Firestorm, thank you for having us.

Libertie Valance: Yeah, such deep appreciation to all of you for sharing today. I hope everybody has a great evening and thank you for being here.

actually. So we had some really nice times.

Actually, we were able to cross-visit a little bit with Dylcia Pagan and Carmen Valentine, the Puerto Rican independentistas, and the Rodriguez sisters [Alicia and Ida Luz]. So it was a political hot bed a little bit. But basically I think that's where Laura and I did more and better connecting than in any other prison.

Eric King: Thank you. I'm going to start with you for this next question because you had to go last the last two times. So each of you, this is going to be different for each of you because the relationships were each different. I want to know, you went into your relationship as a journalist to talk about them, did you face any blowback or stigma or harshness when your relationship transitioned into something romantic? Did you see any of that?

susie day: Yeah, and I wasn't really that much worried about getting blowback from the prison. I mean, we were constant enemies. Anyway, what happened was I think because of the community. I lost some friends. I think they were happy to read about the case and learn more about it, but when I became emotionally involved, I feel like—and again this was a different time, the word codependent was in the air. And doing something like falling in love with somebody in prison is the textbook example of what not to do. It's like, "Oh, they're in trouble? I love them. My life doesn't matter…" So I feel like I, as well as other people, were thinking. "Oh no, no, no, no, no. This is a bad idea. Step away." And I got a lot of that pressure, some of which came from myself. But I don't think it was stigma so much as politics—although that was complicated, too—but, I would say more emotionally.

I will put in this anecdote. Sharon knows this person. She is or may be my sister. I decided to tell my sister, after a few years, of Laura and me carrying on, that there was somebody in my life. So I called my sister in Kansas City, and I said, "Well, there's somebody new," and she goes, "Oh great, that's good you're connected with somebody." And I said, "Yeah, well this is kind of serious because she's in prison," and my sister said, "Oh, well what did she do, murder somebody?" I said, "No, she is in prison because she was convicted of bombing the Capitol." And my sister said, "Oh, that is bad." Like murder isn't. Anyway, it was like people were afraid of what they were convicted of. I mean, let's face it, bombings are scary

and they're complicated. It's one of the things we argued about. But, yeah, it was a very complex situation in terms of stigma, and I may be making it more complicated than it needs to be, but there you go.

Eric King: Perfect. Sharon, yours would have been a little different because he's your father. So for you I guess the question would be did the community, the people you knew, your neighbors, your other family, your friends, did you ever face any stigma from them for who your father was and for loving him and stuff like that?

Sharon Shoatz: I didn't face any real stigma. I had some people who questioned, "Why such commitment?" And my answer to that would always be, "I have a great deal of respect for my mother and father. My father happened to be in a precarious situation that came about as a result of his struggle for liberation for our people." So when you get down to the nitty gritty of it, I think my commitment will always be there for my parents. And I can echo what susie is saying: a bombing is a big thing. What my father was accused of is a big thing. It's not like people really get it if they're not conscious, you know?

So you have to enlighten people, and part of being in my circle is getting that enlightenment. If you're really a friend, then you get it. I don't think there's any real stigma that comes with that. But again, Eric, I'm sure behind my back people were talking, I'm sure of that. I had a cousin who would joke all the time, on my mother's side, about "Y'all going on a prison tour this weekend?" There were little jokes like that, comments about my dad and his relationship with my mother, and the support I had for him knowing that interaction, but otherwise I don't think I faced any real stigma that I know about.

Eric King: Just a little follow-up question, briefly, when you were in, let's say, high school, if you start arguing with someone, did that ever happen, like "Your dad's in jail," or anything?

Sharon Shoatz: No. My brother tells this story about when he escaped, they said, "Have your father escape again so we can get out of school." For me, it wasn't that kind of issue of bullying or the kind of thing that we see now. I didn't face that. I don't know what my brother faced or my sister as well. But, no, I didn't find that to be prevalent during my school years. The escapes were more exciting, and they got us out of school, so it was more

susie day: I'll add also that I think it's really valuable that this book combines different generations of prisoners. There's the Marxist-Leninists, the Panthers, and then there's the anarchists, the younger ecologists. I think it's so valuable because they're all political, they have differences, but that's good, and I think it's really good that they're all together.

Eric King: Well, thank you. I'm feeling so good right now. Also, just a side note before I go to Rochelle, I was in ADX with people that knew Jamil, that were there when he was there, and they hold that dude in the highest respect. There's not a single bad word to be heard about him.
susie day: He's just been transferred to FCI Butner, the medical facility. You probably know.

Eric King: Free Jamil!

susie day: Also, just keep in touch with what's going on in your local area in terms of prison and prisoners. In New York, right now, there's a prison guard strike which is deeply negatively affecting people inside in terms of not getting food, medical care, showers, basic things like that, and Gov. Hochul has stupidly called in the National Guard to fix it.

Eric King: That's right. Rochelle, is there anything you want to sign off with, anything you want to promote, anything you want to talk about before we sign out?

Rochelle Bricker: It was really great to do this with you. I do have to say, the one thing, when we were going through our worst, that you don't hope for the best but you hope to find the possibilities. One thing that always struck me is where the possibilities could be right on the perimeter, and knowing about your dad, and his possibility, his story fell on just the right ear. When we were going through our hardest and everything horrible was happening we couldn't even tell half of it that was happening, but it was just the hope that maybe there's a possibility, maybe there's a possibility the person that's going to help walk him out of prison, or walk him home to us, is paying attention. And you don't know that they're not, or that they're not going to.

Eric King: I am going to sign off now how I always do. For everyone listening please, please write to a prisoner. If you want to write to

Sharon Shoatz: No, not at all. Not at all.

Eric King: Knowing that you got to see him, you got to do that little dance, I'm so happy. I'm so happy that I got to have this conversation with you three.

So, the last question quickly before Libertie kicks us out and attacks me. I want to close out with anything you just want to shout out, any projects you're working on that you want to talk about, or anything you just want to get off your chest. Real quick, this is just a brief moment for you all to express yourselves however you would like. How about you, susie?

susie day: Me? Oh god, okay. Well, just in terms of what I've recently done, I did an interview with a really brilliant writer named Arun Kundnani who's writing a book about Jamil-Al Amin, formerly H. Rap Brown. I interviewed him and it's at *Spectre Journal* online. Then, just generally, I feel like all this has been great, and families and loved ones of people inside prison are the untold story. For every one person inside prison there are like five people, at least—I mean you've got millions of people with huge, deep, chaotic stories that need to be expressed, and I think there's a lot of shame, and people are just not interested. But I think, I hope, this is a step forward to getting us to talk to each other.

Eric King: Thank you so much. Sharon, you're up.

Sharon Shoatz: We're definitely promoting the *I Am Maroon* book. If anybody wants us to come to their town, we're down with coming to promote the book. Other than that, we've been on a tour for the book, basically on the East Coast, around everywhere in 2024, and we look forward to coming anywhere in 2025. If you're interested, the hashtag Instagram is #IAmMaroon, or you can contact my brother, as well.

But I did want to speak also about your book, Eric. I did get a chance to listen to all the stories, I did the audiobook so that I could listen. It was great, so I want to thank you for your support in getting those stories out. Because a lot of those people, you fight on their behalf but you really didn't know what their stories were. So thank you for that.

Eric King: You're welcome, and shout out to Josh Davidson, who did all the hard work...

from that perspective from our friends.

Eric King: Thank you. Rochelle, honey, you met me two months into my sentence, and you were a part of that community. Did you feel or face any stigma or blowback or anything like that when we started getting close from the outside world?

Rochelle Bricker: No, we had a certain type of privilege because he was arrested and he wasn't successful, so one of the things is there wasn't damage that we had to necessarily worry about. We don't have to worry about that, and we didn't have... I think the hardest thing in prison, we were absolved from, and that was the guilt-innocence conundrum. Everything they do to socialize them is to teach them about why you are the problem. You were the one. And then out here, when we're suffering because of them, the whole world's going to remind you what it is. So everybody's meant to drive you all apart. And we share politics and ideologies, so it wasn't... The rest of the world was starting to understand also because Trump was president and people were starting to be like, "There might be a situation in which it's not wrong to assault an officer." People are starting to have these conversations at the dinner table with their dads and stuff like that because there's a big awakening in the nation. So we were absolved from all of that.

I would say the one place where I did have issues was some community stuff, because your work, like, separate your work as an activist, becomes the most powerful kind of support for people, which is love. They can understand why people do desperate things or do it because of love. And for the same reason, it was minimized a lot. Any of the work that would be happening, anything like that, there was a lot of community property that we were, basically. They would have meetings, like at times he'd write something and people would want to edit it and people would want to do that, and consensus on him doing this and consensus on him doing that. In the beginning, we didn't have a whole bunch of community space and stuff, so we were charity projects at times to people who were helping, and there would always be tithes with it. So it would either be you are not working, you're just a wife or a girlfriend, or it wouldn't be understood, and it wouldn't be understood about how it doesn't go away, either. Because I was in these communities prior to all of it. I know it when you embark down that journey, there's never a moment where it isn't happening ever again, and I think that people who know you on the that?

outside, they don't see that balance shift and they don't see the heavy things that just get put on top of that and how there's no break from the hell.

Eric King: Thank you. I love you so much.

Sharon, I'm going to start with you with this question. Once again, everyone's going to have a different perspective, and I think that's so important. Were there ever times when it felt less hopeful? Were there times when it was like "goddamn, this is too hard"? Or maybe not too hard, but it just hit harder than other times? When it was just almost too tough? Did you ever have any experiences like

Sharon Shoatz: Yes. I think there are always times when you feel powerless, you feel like what you're doing may be in vain. You're always on that constant roller coaster of knowing it's the right thing to do, but there are those hills and valleys, highs and lows, that you go through, particularly when you're not able to intervene in your loved ones' health care. I think that was probably the most powerless.

Even when he was shipped to a hospital, you wouldn't even know. You would get a call from someone at the prison letting you know. I remember one time we got a call from Chuckie Africa who told Mike Africa to tell all the Shoatz kids that their father has been shipped out of here. We don't know what's going on, so we were able to jump right on it. But if you don't get those calls, you're powerless to even help in a situation. Your loved one could be dying, and you don't even know what's going on. They don't tell you where he is. And the key thing is it's a security risk, so under that guise they can do whatever they want. So having that limited access, I think, was the times when I felt the most powerless. Times when he was struggling, when he first got to Greene, to adjust to that new way of living was also difficult. I think in the end with him catching COVID and the prison lockdown, and they were just doing what they wanted, those were times when I felt powerless.

Other times, I always felt empowered because I think of the support groups around us, the orgs and the various people that I know, like susie and Laura, seeing those people who were really in the struggle. Those 20th century Panthers up walking the streets of Harlem and sharing their stories. So, yeah, although you feel powerless, you also feel encouraged by there's hurt involved, there's just so much conflicting emotions.

Sharon, if you could, I might be able to ask just a quick last question, but I want to hear what it was like when Maroon was released, what you went through emotionally, physically, just what that whole day was like for you.

Sharon Shoatz: It was definitely different from anything I imagined. Like you said, it's a lot of conflicting emotions going on. It was both joyous and emotional relief, but of course it was bittersweet because my father was frail. He was not in the condition of a man that could get up and move around. But the fact was that he was home, he was around comrades, family, friends, supporters. He didn't have to die in an institution, so from that perspective it was glorious. It was wonderful. Of course, again, it was not the sparks I thought it was going to be, and I remember doing a little freedom dance. I was like, "Freedom!" and I remember him smiling. I felt like this huge weight just slipped off of me because I felt free after all of these years. So, for me, although it was bittersweet, it was just an emotional, physical, joyous time that lifted so much weight off of me and it allowed me to also gain my freedom. I felt you like I was free, too, and I just did my little freedom dance and I was good. Despite the fact that his health had deteriorated so much in order for him to get home and for him to have to go through it that way, I think everything happens for a reason. The fact is he came home. We were grateful. I know I was grateful. I can't speak for anybody else, but I think everyone else was grateful that he was able to come home and to share that time with him. Half of the family didn't know him, which was the other thing. What I'm saying, that in itself is a success. And that's what I like about the book I Am Maroon, as well, because they really now get to know who he was. And they got to meet him in person to get that real effect, too, because that's a little different than the book. So yeah, it was great.

Eric King: Thank you so much. So, I don't expect you to know this at all but Maroon was one of my heroes. He just embodied that fighting spirit, and I would write my little essays about him all the time. In 2018, there was a thing that was put out in all the newsletters like, "Write about Maroon." I forget what it was called, but I remember writing just that I hope this dude gets out so bad. And the day he was released I remember just weeping, because no one expected it, like he wasn't the one we expected.

beefing or not. It was quite a little bit of a show with the halfway house. Definitely it was to cut down all the things that kept us apart over the next year or so. We're both healing from trauma. We both experienced different sides of that trauma. My need to protect him so heavily, especially because we were involved in a case against the U.S. attorney for a very up close and personal case, against the U.S. attorney for four or five years. And they're having to protect him against the prison and all of that.

So now, when he's coming home and he's going through his trauma, it's my job to then go step in and fix, historically, whenever there's a problem. I would be really sensitive to his pain and he would be really sensitive to my pain. It was a lot of passing it back and forth. Our whole lives were disrupted in the beginning because of the halfway house. I would drive an hour to pick him up [in order] to drive 30 minutes to Eric's work. I'd sit on the floor next to his desk at work like an emotional support dog and whenever he would get upset or something I would be able to give him love. I would come in and out and then we'd spend all day out of the house, and then I'd drive him back there and then drive another hour south to home. It was all about how do I help, because I know him so well, we're so close. I know the things that he needs.

You talked about codependence earlier. You can't have a loving relationship in prison without codependency, because we need each other, we need each other so desperately and in a very intimate way. If you can transition that on the outside, then you have something that is—because of the pain you've been through, because of that—you have something that just can be so beautiful and easy, because of how hard it is prior to that. But you've got to put those walls down first. You've got to both put your walls down. You've got to both get adjusted, and that's aside from whatever trauma you picked up during that time.

But things are doing pretty well right now. I prefer to think about right now rather than release day. Eric and I talked about what a horrible day that was, so much pressure for both of us. It was so scary.

Eric King: Thank you. It's kind of like New Year's Day, where everyone expects the party to be super fun and gets overhyped and you finally do it and it doesn't live up because you have all these imaginary preconceptions of how it's supposed to be. Kind of like the hug you were talking about, Sharon, where it has to be the best thing on earth. But

the organizations and the camaraderie and the solidarity.

Eric King: Thank you. A quick follow up, and I hope this isn't a shitty question. Did you ever expect him to get out?

Sharon Shoatz: No, I didn't think he would get out, but I was always hopeful that he would get out. But the multiple escapes, his jacket, was the reason why I didn't think he would get out. The jacket had a lot on it. It was a full jacket, and when you look at it, and after speaking with his legal team who were saying that every county that he ran through during the escape could bring charges against him, and I'm like, "Really? Wow." So there was a lot on his jacket, and that was the thing that kept me thinking, "No, they're not going to approve that."

And then the politics. I mean, the politics is heavy, and it's a politics that they wanted to crush under COINTELPRO, under all of those apparatuses that keep people who struggle for liberation down so that they don't create the next messiah, as the FBI and J. Edgar Hoover would say. So, yeah, that's why.

Eric King: Okay, awesome. Thank you so much. susie?

susie day: Yeah, I am so relating to everything you just said, Sharon. I want to just add that I am so—here come the waterworks—so moved by what you and Theresa and Russell Jr. hung on to and went through all those years. To have a parent in prison most of your life and to hang in there. And he was actually able to live the last couple of months out before he passed, so, I mean, it's great, but it's also kind of wrong to be so grateful for such a small thing, you know?

But in terms of health, that is one of the things that was really hard on Laura. At one point, when she was in California and I was in New York, I knew she was in bad health and they might do an operation, a laparoscopic assist or something, and I didn't know when that was going to be. But we were talking kind of regularly on the phone, and then suddenly she didn't call, and I thought, "Okay, she said she would. Where is she?" So I called other people in the Bay Area who would know where she was and they didn't know, either. And they really didn't understand, none of them, especially lawyers and people who knew the system better than I did. Nobody could understand what was going on. Then, finally, a

couple of days later she finally got to a phone and said, "Yeah, they took me away to a hospital where I had this operation," and I was at that point such an emotional mess that I didn't know what had happened. Anyway, it was just a very hard time because Laura was going through just enormous physical pain and uncertainty, and me going through feeling selfish for going through all this emotional stuff.

I think part of why it was so hard for me, I don't know about for anybody else, but for me I felt bad because I had a whole lot of feelings that just didn't fit into the political picture. It was like "Free Leonard Peltier," "Free Laura Whitehorn," "Free Mumia," "Free Maroon," but what about me? I don't know what the hell I'm doing here, so will somebody please look at me? And yet Laura was doing the best she could. Partly, largely, that was the system, but it also worked to create and be a self-hating mentality, which is my problem but that was partly why it was so hard.

Eric King: Did Clinton pardon or commute Laura or did she get out?

susie day: No, no, she maxed out.

Eric King: Okay, okay. I wasn't sure if she was a part of that group.

susie day: No, no. Linda and Susan and the Puerto Ricans were differently pardoned by Clinton.

Eric King: Yeah, I think that's really valid about what you were saying about how there's ways that we're supposed to feel, or supporters are supposed to feel, but there's also the internal feelings. And that guilt, I think, is very real, and I wish I could take it away.

Rochelle, my love, were there ever times when you felt just the most hopeless, like this hurts too much? What were those times like for you?

Rochelle Bricker: There were so many iterations of those times. I would definitely say, because we had a lot of extremely bad experiences in different ways, like when he was attacked in Florence, it was pretty desperate, and that was the worst because… Well, first they sent him out of Englewood saying he had assaulted an officer by drawing a cartoon. I just showed up to visit him, and he's not there. But the guy sitting there, who we had problems with, is like laughing and walking off, and so I'm

Eric King: Thank you for that. Thank you both for your recollections. I'm going to jump to Rochelle for this last little question, and then we'll close out with you, Sharon. What was it like the day I was released? What was it like for you inside, internally or mentally, and then what was the moment like for you?

Rochelle Bricker: We had to fight over the last year to get him released. It didn't seem like it was going to happen. We didn't know if he was going to get hit with another case on the way out the door. We lived the whole time with the reality that maybe there's another one, because they tried, they definitely tried, and maybe there was going to be another one. Then we had all sorts of terrible stuff with the halfway house before we came to an amazing understanding with probation. There were some difficulties there, because not everybody in probation wanted him here, so there were some people fighting to allow him to come to Colorado, but then there were some people who didn't feel safe with that. So it was all a fight. That was no different, like it's two hours away, so we went and stayed overnight in the hotel and got up in the morning and got there. You're supposed to come onto the compound to pick them up, and then suddenly we were not allowed on the compound. That was abnormal. There were times when it was just suddenly we're not allowed or anything like that.

But for release, none of the guards at the front had ever seen a release where they don't release at the prison. The compound has four different prisons on it and I think they didn't know how they were going to get him down to the gate. They weren't going to let me on, so they had us go sit in the van on the side of the road. It was terrible because I had driven down before and found horrible things, so the reality of what does this mean—is he getting out? We didn't know. Then he came down, I ran and gave him a hug. The whole day there were all these things that I needed to do, all these demands, all of these, "If you don't do these things he can't get here." I got sick, I was vomiting the whole night before, and I was afraid I wouldn't be able to stop vomiting, like I wouldn't be able to get him out. I was afraid of all these things. We had to get to Denver, we had to get to Target, we had to get to the halfway house. We had like a lot of people in the van and somebody had the heat blasting so my face was red, overwhelmed and overstimulated.

Then we got to the halfway house and I had to let go of him again. Then, the people at the halfway house, in the beginning, had to decide if we were

it to be—that I would have wanted it to be. Things are just so complicated, and Laura had to learn to live in a whole other way. She'd been used to living just psychologically so differently than I was used to living. Just crossing the street with her early on, she would walk so slowly. It was just the assault of reality.

Eric King: Who is Yuri Kochiyama?

susie day: There was just a program for her and Malcolm X at the Schomburg a couple of days ago. Sharon knew her as well. Let me just say this, and then, Sharon, you can fill it in. Yuri was great. She was loved by thousands of people. She was a radical. She, as a young kid, had spent some time in a concentration camp, being Japanese during World War II. And that radicalized her. It was a really good program, but in terms of the theme of this entire discussion, I was struck that nobody mentioned her husband Bill. Bill "quiet" Kochiyama, who was such a kind and gentle person, always on the scene, and yet was completely forgotten in this context where people were talking about Yuri's friendship with Malcolm X—because she was there at the time he was shot and they were very close. I guess you didn't know this...

Eric King: This is why we ask the questions, so we can grow. Sharon, do you want to add something?

Sharon Shoatz: Yuri was a special person. I didn't know her husband, but I know I have a treasured memory of Yuri, particularly when she came to Philly for one of the Mumia trials. It was during the Judge Sabo time and they weren't letting many of the supporters in the courtroom. It was basically filled with the FoP. So Yuri came out and they said, "Well, who do you want to have your seat?" And she said, "Russell and Sharon Shoatz." My brother and I looked at each other and we were shocked. She said, "Wait a minute. Your father's here. Maroon is here. This is Philadelphia, and you should definitely be in there." When we went there it was the first time. I had always protested on the outside for Mumia but never had a chance to get inside the actual courtroom. It was just stunning: the FoP in full force and this little area set aside for the supporters of Mumia. So, yeah, Yuri was very special. And Yuri was on a walker at that time. She had come to Philadelphia, and she came out of the courtroom with her walker. She was just a spirited, strong woman who, as they talked about in the event, connected people together all the time. She was just wonderful.

like, "I didn't think this was going to happen," and it started the train of possibilities that would happen to us from that point out.

But when he was attacked in Florence, it happened the day I was going home from surgery for my thyroid cancer. I woke up, and it was crazy because I had an email from Section 8 awarding us a house for the first time, and then I'm going home, and I get a call from another person's wife saying that Eric had attacked the lieutenant, that something had happened and Eric had attacked the lieutenant and everybody's locked down. They didn't know what was happening, and I had just had thyroid cancer surgery, so I was having fevers and my throat had just been cut open. So the devastation and the unknowing... Like, we didn't know how we could do it in the beginning. We didn't know how we would ever... Like a 30-day phone ban, that's unmeasurable. We couldn't imagine not talking to each other. Then they would do something else, and so that was really hopeless.

We didn't have a lot of resources. There wasn't a guide book for this. It was so hard, and at the time it made it especially hard because the people who were involved in building his case were these attorneys, but they were also the U.S. attorneys in Colorado. You could have both jobs, so you could do the BOP's best interest and then also the U.S. attorney's office. It's like a funnel through with charges, and so that was pretty terrible.

I guess I'll just go in order, because he got back to Englewood, and he wasn't supposed to be back at that prison ever. There was a protection order against one of the guards, like an internal protection order, that said that he assaulted them, and so they're not supposed to be together. So I assumed surely they're sending him anywhere else, like anywhere else, anywhere else but Englewood. I remember I visited him in Grady county jail and we were scared. We didn't know what was happening, and there was still an openness between us, and then when he got there and they got to him, the trauma kicked in. He didn't understand his trauma at the time, either, and so they would agitate and I wouldn't get very much time with him. I'd be trying to calm him down, like "Come back, we got this." And I would spend all my days writing letters to try to get him the right words, because I knew what was happening, I knew the pattern, that I was losing him. He wouldn't understand. When I'd be like, "We're fighting this case, and we've got to do this," and he would believe that his resistance in prison was what was going to bring him home. It was just a disconnect

between trauma and reality. It was like, “I’m going to go hard in here. We’re going to barricade the units, and we’re going to do this hell because I need to get to you.” My cancer stuff was popping back up again and health stuff, and he was like “I need to get to you.” And I knew that wasn’t him. I knew that he was hurting and lost, and I had to find a way to give him hope.

I managed to get through to him before he was attacked, and that was a hard time. I got a phone call saying they had taken him into the shower as he was handcuffed, and the officer who had been attacking him and harassing us had broken his head open while he was handcuffed. At that point, I didn’t know if they were going to kill him or not, so that was a hard time. But, I would say we went through a really dark time when he first got to the ADX, because in the months prior we had been, I don’t know how long we were fighting for placement in Colorado with the U.S. attorney’s office, they were turning us down and stuff. In the back of my head I had known something really fucked up happened when they visited my house—CPS did once. I didn’t want to look for what the report was, like I didn’t want to read it. The CPS worker, at one point in it I was like, “I know I probably sound paranoid, but…” And she’s like, ”You’re not crazy.” She’s like, “This is how you look the report up,” and I did not want to know what was in that report, but I filled out the paperwork out to get it, and he was in ADX, and it turned out that a week after Jan. 6, when they gave him renewed communication restrictions, they called Child Protective Services and they provided… Sorry.

So, for COVID, when the visits shut down, we had in-person visits and we were allowed to visit. We did have phone privileges, because he went on a hunger strike in Leavenworth, and he got a public safety factor for that, because we put something online, and they said it was threatening staff and harassing BOP employees. So they took our phone privileges, and nobody told us they couldn’t take our phone, so we didn’t know, and so COVID hit and they gave everybody else the ability to have visits over the phone, but we didn’t get those. And we didn’t have any method of communication. They were throwing away our letters, just rejecting them back and forth for three months. I have 50 in an envelope, and those are the only 50 I got back after all of that.

But what they did do was selectively take any moment I felt sad or hard or anything that showed my mental health or devastation as a parent,

anything like that, and they reported us for having an injured environment because of our politics. And they sent photos of my body in the report that I had sent to him, and it says, “And then Rochelle talks about capitalism.” It’s all of this stuff, and so it didn't matter, the law. That was probably the hardest, because I knew whatever they could do to us now, we knew that the law wasn’t going to stop them. From that point on, the reality of their ability to impact our life and all of that, I think that was the worst because we can think up things so much bigger than they can do.

Eric King: We also feel guilt, immense guilt, and think about that every day. Just mindless resistance because you think it’s the right thing to do. It’s hard.

So we’ve got a little bit of time left. I really want to know, before anything gets closed out, what was it like when they got released? What did the release feel like? What was the situation like? What did you feel? susie, we’ll start with you.

susie day: I was never quite sure when, or sometimes if, Laura was going to get out, and then about a year or two before she actually did they gave her a release date. That was August 6, 1999, and there was a chance she wouldn’t get a halfway house, but that didn’t happen. I was upset about that, but I thought, “Well, that’s only six months.” She got out. She walked out on a Friday morning, and I was kind of a mix of a million different emotions. I was relieved and happy, yet we weren’t really sure about how our relationship was going to work out.

There was a a huge women’s community in the Bay Area, and most of them were there, too, so it was kind of a confusing and chaotic time. We went off to like two or three different parties that same day, and then the next day I think we stayed at the house of one of Laura’s lawyers, Marilyn “Mo” Kalman, and she and Laura got up early to go visit Yuri Kochiyama. Then we took the plane back to New York after that.

Then it was great, but the next two or three years were challenging. We didn’t live together at first, which I think was a really good idea. Then, after about a year and a half, we moved in. We’ve continued the political arguments but I think it’s been okay. I guess my point is that it wasn’t the epiphany, the salvation, the breakthrough that I think people would want